

## 1893 Isabella Quarter Dollar



Mintage of 40,023, 23 for assay and 15,809 melted. Designed by Charles E. Barber and distributed by the Board of Lady Managers. A coin I used to own. A Mark Goodman image.

Approved by Congress on March 3, 1893 and issued in conjunction with the Worlds Columbian Exposition in Chicago and celebrates the industrious role of women in society.

### Design:

**Obverse:** Crowned bust of young Queen Isabella. The legend encircling the bust reads UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and the date 1893 is found to the right of the Queen's image.

**Reverse:** A kneeling female figure with a distaff in hand in the act of winding flax. The distaff is used in art to symbolize patient industry, and especially the industry of woman. Surrounding the image, on the coin's border, the inscription reads BOARD OF LADY MANAGERS and COLUMBIAN QUAR. DOL.



The Isabella Quarter was not only one of the first U.S. commemoratives coins, but it was the first, and only, early commemorative quarter, and the first to feature the portrait of royalty-Queen Isabella of Spain.

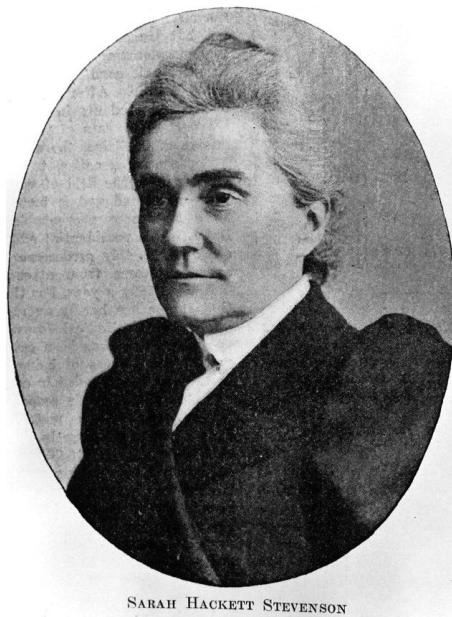
“ . . . It was the spoons which brought the greatest return to the Ladies' coffers—unless one considers a more ambitious project as a souvenir: that is, the Ladies' Queen Isabella commemorative quarter. This was the first American coin to bear the likeness of a female historical personage. Isabella's likeness on three Columbian commemorative stamps marks the first appearance of a female on American stamps, as well. In addition, the 'Isabella' remains the only commemorative quarter struck by the Mint.

On August 5, 1892, the Commissioners were authorized by Congress to strike a Columbian half dollar, in honor of the Exposition. A month later, Dr. Sarah Hackett Stevenson of the Queen Isabella Association decided that the Ladies should have a coin too, and that it should honor Isabella, for womanhood and for the Queen herself, whose adherents Mrs. Palmer had effectively stifled.

*Bertie Ammie Palmer*



Mr. & Mrs. Potter Palmer & World's Fair Party, San Antonio, Texas. Nov 2, 1891. Courtesy of *The Fair Women* by Jeanne Madeline Weimann, p. 134.



SARAH HACKETT STEVENSON

Courtesy of the *International Museum of Surgical Science*.

Since Dr. Stevenson was not a Lady Manager, she enlisted the aid of Mary Logan to introduce her resolution at the Board meeting. The resolution called for a souvenir coin 'bearing on one side Queen Isabella and on the other Mrs. Potter Palmer—in case Mrs. Palmer positively declines, the alternate to be Martha Washington.' Mrs. Logan read the resolution, requesting two or more thousand dollars as the amount of the appropriation for the coin, and eliminating Mrs. Palmer, since it was illegal for a living person to be portrayed on a coin. Mrs. Logan, living up to her reputation as unpredictable, to say the least, then argued against the resolution, ensuring its defeat. Dr. Stevenson was moved to write Mrs. Logan on October 28, 1892:

*I was grieved and greatly surprised when I learned about what was done with my resolution. Had you told me you were not in favor of it and should vote against it I should have asked someone else to present it, for of course there is no surer way to kill a resolution than for the mover to oppose it. I was told that. . . you did it evidently with malice of forethought. My dear friend, I*

*did not wish my name to appear—that is not the motive I had in mind. I knew the Women's Department needed money. I thought this a dignified and popular way of seeking it. You could sell an almost unlimited number of such souvenir coins. Mrs. Palmer was enthusiastic.*

Mrs. Palmer was indeed enthusiastic, whatever Mary Logan may have thought. On December 12 at a Sub-Executive Committee session she resurrected the idea, reading aloud a letter she proposed to send to Congress about the coin. Clara Thatcher of Chicago then offered a resolution similar to the one offered by Mary Logan, but suggesting the Woman's Building rather than Martha Washington for the reverse of the coin. On March 3, 1893, Congress authorized that \$10,000 of the Board's annual budget appear in the form of Isabella quarters. . . "1

<sup>1</sup> Mementoes of an Emancipated Era. Courtesy of *The Fair Women*, by Jeanne Madeline Weimann, Chicago Academy Publishers, 1981, p. 477.

"February 1893

Miss Hallowell  
Grand Hotel  
Broadway, NY

My dear Miss Hallowell,

Your letter is just received and I am delighted to learn that you are pleased with my idea in regards to the Isabella coins.

Would it be too much trouble for you to find out for me at once, which of the artists would undertake and carry out this work. We are hoping to have it designed and executed with great feeling as well as exquisite delicacy, and I know of no one whose judgment we trust as well as yours to find an expert possessing the necessary qualifications. I beg that you will finish out also how the designs could be ready and how much it would cost. The time is so short that I hope you will be able to let me have definite information in a few days.

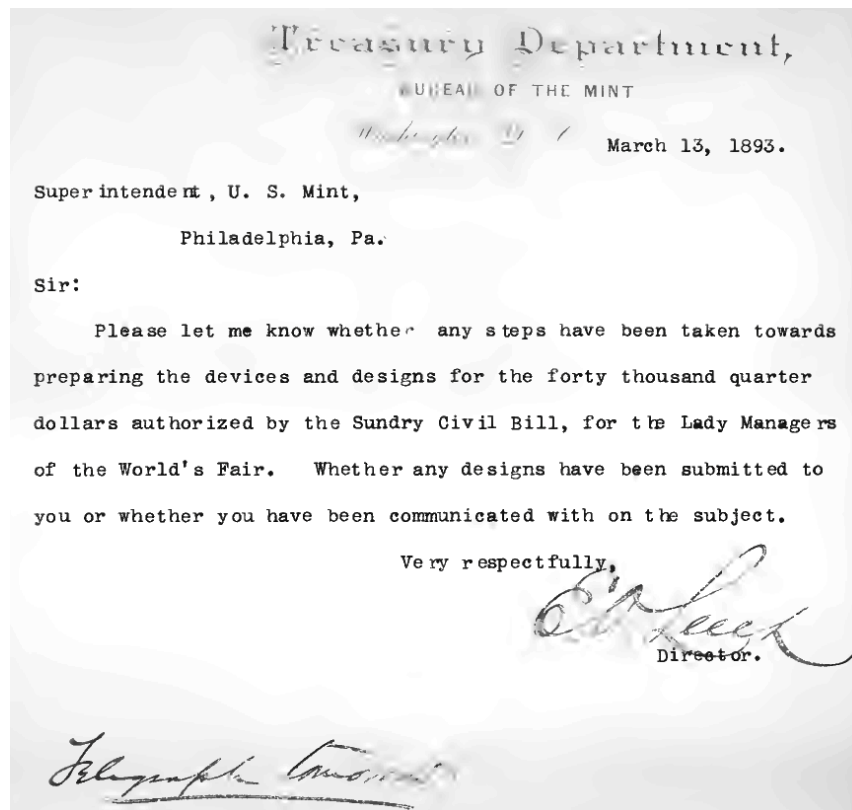
Regretting that I am obliged to put you to this at so busy a time, and asking you to accept my apologies.

I am

Most cordially yours,

(signed) Bertha Honoré Palmer"<sup>2</sup>

**Official Government Documents:**



RG 104, Entry 1, 1893, Box 180, p. 839.

<sup>2</sup> National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park (CP), MD, Record Group (RG) 104, entry 235, vol. 67.

"March 14, 1893

My dear Mr. Logan:

I am most anxious that you and Mr. Wilkins should see at once the Secretary of the Treasury and if necessary the Director of the Mint in regard to our Columbian coin.

I find that a phrase has been changed in the bill so that as it now reads the Director of the Mint has the right to select the design although it must be afterward approved by the Secretary of the Treasury.

The Director of the Mint was very much provoked because he was not asked to enter any designs for the competition for the Columbian Coin, and as he was evidently angered at what he considered an infringement of his prerogative, I think he is responsible for the change in the phraseology.

I beg that you will find out at once from the Secretary of the Treasury if the Director of the Mint has the sole power to prescribe designs and whether any designs we may submit will be impartially considered.

We are most anxious to have our artistic coin and want it designed by Kenyon Cox or some equally well known artist, and as we shall be obliged to pay for their work, we are compelled to suspend negotiations with the artists until we reach a definite understanding on this point.

Unless we get some support from the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of the Mint will undoubtedly throw out our design and we would like to get the credit of being the author of the first really beautiful and artistic coin which has been issued by the Government of the United States.

We must have some immediate decision and I beg you will therefore call upon Mr. Carlisle and Mr. Graham at once to see if something cannot be done to enable us to carry out our plan. We are perfectly willing to receive any sketches the Director of the Mint may choose to offer, but feel that the privilege should be accorded me of having our design selection, in case we consider it the best.

I cannot impress upon you too strongly the urgent necessity for haste, as it will be impossible even now to get our coin designed and minted by June, and any delay would be fatal.

As the Director of the Mint belongs to the past Administration, it may be easy to deal with him, as he will undoubtedly be unwilling to weaken his tenure of office by opposing any measure which is supported by the new officials in power.

Begging that you will lose no time in this matter, and that you will telegraph me the result, and assuring you of my pleasure at being able to place this important commission in such able and willing hands.

I am,

Most cordially yours,

To:

Mr. John A. Logan [Jr.]  
Calumet Place  
Washington D. C.

March 14, 1893

Mrs. Potter Palmer  
Board of Lady Managers  
World's Columbian Exposition  
Rand, McNally Building  
Chicago, Ills.

Congress has authorized the coinage of forty thousand souvenir quarter dollars as appropriation for Board of Lady Managers, the devices and designs to be prescribed by me. In order that this coinage may be executed promptly it is desirable that the designs should be selected at once. I will be pleased to conform to the wishes of the Lady Managers in the selection of the designs. Please indicate whether anything has been done in the way of designs, and whether it is desirable that I should send the engraver of the Mint to Chicago to confer on the subject, or will the designs be brought here or to the mint at Philadelphia.

E.O. Leech  
Director, Mint



To:  
Mr. John A. Logan [Jr.]  
Calumet Place  
Washington D. C.

As the Director of the Mint belongs to the past Administration, it may be easy to deal with him, as he will undoubtedly be unwilling to weaken his tenure of office by opposing any measure which is supported by the new officials in power.

Begging that you will lose no time in this matter, and that you will telegraph me the result, and assuring you of my pleasure at being able to place this important commission in such able and willing hands.

I am,

March 16, 1893

Mr. Leech,

Dear Sir,

Your courteous telegram of March 14th is just received, and I hasten to say that we have a decided on an idea as to the design we wish to have placed upon the souvenir coin. It was the intention to commemorate by this issue the helpful part taken by Queen Isabella of Spain in the discovery of America, and also the action of Congress in having created the Board of Lady Managers.

We have been consulting with one or two friends as to the most rapid manner of securing something that will be highly artistic, and I am very greatly obliged, consequently, for the generous spirit that you manifest in allowing us to satisfy our whims about this.

We are most anxious to have the coin issued by May first, as in order to get the proper price for it, it would have to be placed on the market as soon as possible. As soon as we have suggestions made about the design, I should be glad to avail myself of your courteous offer to have the director of the Mint come to Chicago to consult us about it.

Would your Bureau wish to submit a design to us for competition, embodying the ideas we have indicated?

Thanking you again, and assuring you I will let you know at the earliest possible moment, I am

Very truly yours,

Bertha Honré Palmer

Hon. E.C. Leach,  
Director of the Mint,  
Washington, D.C.

March 17, 1893

Mrs. Bertha Honré Palmer  
Prest. Bd of Lady Managers  
World's Columbian Exposition  
Chicago, Ills.

Dear Madam:

'If a head of Isabella is to be selected for one side it will only be necessary to forward her effigy to me. It is not necessary to employ any sculptor or modeler.'

Very respectfully,

E.O. Leech, Director of the Mint"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> NARA, CP, RG 104, entry 235, vol. 67.

# Treasury Department,

BUREAU OF THE MINT.

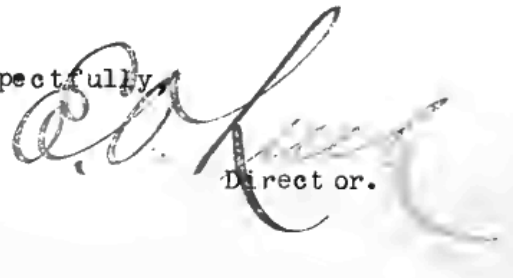
*Washington, D. C.* March 17, 1893.

Superintendent, U. S. Mint,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Sir:

Replying to your letter of yesterday, enclosing one from the Engraver of the mint, relative to the souvenir quarters for the World's Columbian Exposition, I would say that I have telegraphed Mrs. Potter Palmer in accordance with his suggestions, that if the ladies will prepare a rough sketch indicating what they want in the way of designs and emblems the Engraver of the mint will take pleasure in working them up into completed designs which will be re-submitted to them.

Very respectfully,

  
Director.

Treasury Department,

BUREAU OF THE MINT,

*Washington D C*

March 27, 1893.

The Superintendent, U. S. Mint,

Philadelphia, Pa.

Sir:

It is probable that the Lady Managers of the World's Fair will have some sculptor make a model for the obverse of the souvenir quarter, 40,000 of which (\$10,000) are authorized to be struck as a part of the appropriation for the World's Fair.

I would suggest that the engraver of the mint prepare some suitable design for the reverse of the coin and submit it to me at his earliest convenience.

Very respectfully,



Director.

# Treasury Department,

BUREAU OF THE MINT.

*Washington* 2 6

March 29, 1893.

The Superintendent, U. S. Mint,

Philadelphia, Pa.

Sir:

Replying to your letter of the 28th instant, relative to my request that the engraver of the mint prepare a design for the reverse of the souvenir quarter, I enclose herewith a letter from Mrs. Palmer, addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury, on the subject.

It is not the intention of the Department to follow out the suggestions of Mrs. Palmer in regard to the design of the reverse of the coin as it would seem to be too much like an advertisement for the Board of Lady Managers. At the same time the Secretary is anxious to conform as nearly as possible to the wishes of the ladies, that is, with a due regard to suitableness and to artistic taste.

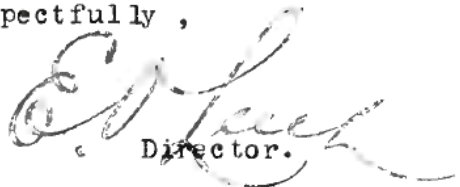
It seems to me that the suggestions as to lettering etc. should come from the engraver and not from me, and also the inscriptions. If I knew exactly what inscriptions and designs it was intended to be placed upon the coin I would not have written and requested that your engraver prepare a design.

All the information I have on this subject is contained in the



enclosed letter from Mrs. Palmer, and my intention was to take it for granted that the head of Isabella, with suitable lettering, would appear on the obverse of the coin, and that the engraver should prepare a design for the reverse conforming, as I have said, as nearly as possible to the wishes of the Lady Managers, and at the sametime securing a coin which would reflect credit upon the Government issuing it and upon the authorities of the World's Fair.

Very respectfully ,



Director.

Treasury Department,

BUREAU OF THE MINT,

*Washington* 31 / March 31, 1893.

The Superintendent, U. S. Mint,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Sir:

Enclosed herewith I transmit a letter from Mrs. Palmer and also one from Miss Peddle of New York, who has been selected to prepare the model for the souvenir quarter.

This selection meets with the approval of the Secretary and myself, and you will please indicate to Miss Peddle the size and character of the model which will be required from which to engrave the dies.

Very respectfully,

  
Director.

## SHE IS DESIGNING THE ISABELLA COIN.

Miss Carrie Peddle of Terre Haute Showing Marked Genius as a Sculptor.

TERRE HAUTE, Ind., April 7.—[Special Correspondence.]—Miss Carrie Peddle, who has been commissioned to design the model for the "Isabella" coin provided for in the last World's Fair appropriation bill, is a



MISS CARRIE PEDDLE.

Terre Haute girl, the daughter of Charles R. Peddle, general purchasing agent of the Vandalia railroad company. She was graduated at the High School in 1887 when 17 years old. For several years she has been studying at Philadelphia at the Academy of Design and for two years under the instruction of St. Gaudens in the Art Students' League. During the winter she was at work on a design for a statue of the Virgin Mary for Louis Tiffany of New York. This has been completed and it is judged to be of such surpassing merit as to be worthy of a place among the American sculpture at the World's Fair instead of among Tiffany's industrial display. Mrs. Potter Palmer desired that the "Isabella" coin be designed by a woman, and St. Gaudens recommended Miss Peddle. She expects to finish the design in three weeks. Miss Peddle as a child evinced a decided aptitude for drawing, which she inherited from her father. She is modest to the degree of self-depreciation, and has avoided public mention even at her home. So well satisfied was Tiffany with her "Mary" that she was given a commission for a design of "The Vision of the Sacred Heart."

From *The Fair Women*, by Jeanne Madeline Weimann, Chicago Academy Publishers, 1981, p. 483.

Caroline Peddle was twenty-three years old and had gone from her home in Terre Haute, Indiana, to study first for a year at the Philadelphia Academy of Design, and then for two years with Augustus St. Gaudens at the Art Students' League in New York. Her model of the Virgin Mary, executed by Louis Tiffany's studio, was on exhibit in the Arts Palace, a signal honor. Mrs. Palmer gave Miss Peddle the commission for the coin on March 22, 1893. For the obverse, which was to honor Isabella, she sent Miss Peddle engravings of the Queen. For the reverse, which was to commemorate the congressional act of creating the Board of Lady Managers, Mrs. Palmer, unable to think of a suitable illustration, offered an inscription:

*Commemorative Coin Issued for the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Exposition by Act of Congress, 1492-1892.*

At the same time she informed Secretary of the Treasury Carlisle of her decisions concerning the coin. On March 28 he wrote to her, attempting to dissuade her from using the inscription:

*... with a strong desire to comply with your request I have been constrained to come to the conclusion that it will be impossible to put so much lettering upon the coin as you propose without wholly destroying its artistic merit and giving it the appearance of an ordinary advertisement, such as tradesmen have been in the habit for some years of issuing.*

*The space upon the surface of the coin is so small that the letters of the inscription... would necessarily be very small and liable to be defaced by the least wear; and besides they exclude all ornamentation of any kind.*

*The words 'United States of America' must under the law go upon the coin at some place, while the words 'World's Columbian Exposition', or something indicating that it is issued for that institution, ought also to be on the other side. After this is done there will be very little space... and if the reverse of the coin is left entirely without ornamentation, containing only an inscription in letters, it seems to me that the appearance of the coin would not be at all attractive.*

Although she had grave doubts about the artistic taste of government officials, Mrs. Palmer was willing to have her inscription shortened; but the four words 'Board of Lady Managers' she must have.

*I would call your attention to the fact that the World's Columbian Exposition has previously been given a coin bearing an appropriate motto and that the present issue was especially voted by Congress for our Board, which fact is so gratifying to me, that we naturally are anxious that some indication of it be made on the coin itself.*

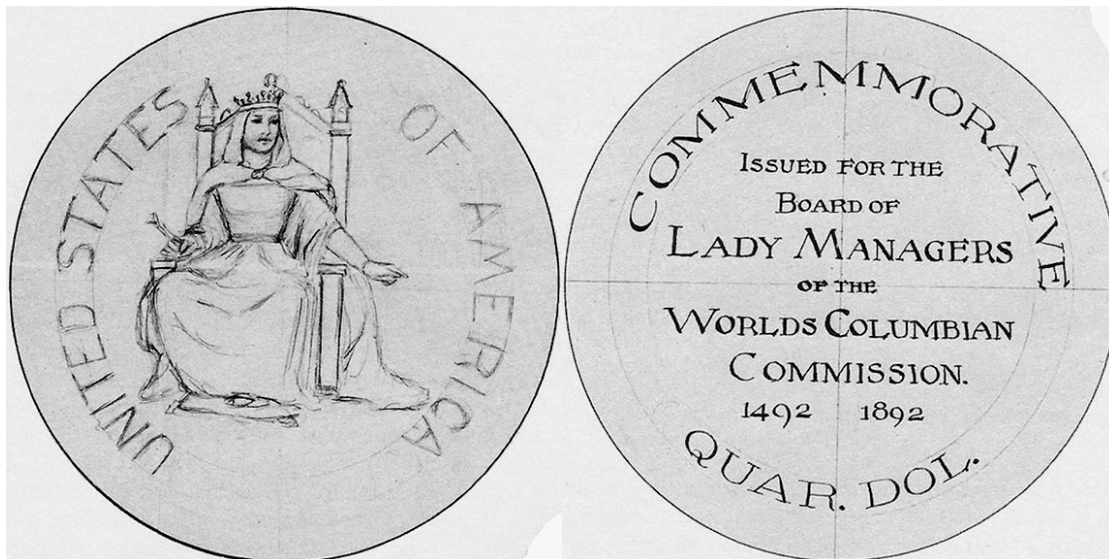
Mrs. Palmer told Miss Peddle on March 31 that the inscription should be dropped, and the original idea for the reverse—a representation of the Woman's Building—should be used instead. By a twist of fate, Miss Peddle did not receive this letter, and consequently was struggling to fit Mrs. Palmer's gargantuan inscription onto the coin. She sent a rough sketch of the inscription to Director Leech at the Mint with a note:

*Does this coin, as an especial case, necessitate the use of the words 'By Act of Congress'? Any shortening of the inscription would be a good thing as a longer one would bring the letters when reduced to almost microscopic size.*

Later that same day she sent Mr. Leech her sketch of Isabella with another note:

*I shall have to ask a few more questions before beginning the modeling. Mrs. Palmer spoke of having a figure of Isabella on the face, and I have made a rude sketch from the print she sent me.*

*This, it seems to me, would make a handsomer coin than a head unless it would not reduce well. It is in the same proportion as the seated Liberty on the older quarters. My sketch is not placed correctly, of course, on the circle as I did it very hastily, merely to show you the size. If you will telegraph your decision as to this point, I will commence work at once.*



**Rough sketch by Caroline Peddle for Columbian Exposition (Isabella) quarter dollar. Courtesy of Taxay, p. 2.**

The people of the Mint were not disposed to give Miss Peddle any advice, or any quarter either, to coin a phrase. Charles Barber did some sketches to prove that Mrs. Palmer's inscription would not fit on the coin, a point that everyone conceded already. Mr. Barber submitted his own sketches to his supervisor, O.C. Bosbyshell, with a note:

*You no doubt have seen it is quite impossible to put all the reading matter furnished by Mrs. Potter Palmer on as small a coin as a twenty-five cent piece and therefore the question arises how much shall be used, that is to what extent is the Director of the Mint willing to comply with the request of the ladies, and it is more to ascertain this point that I submit the design than anything else.*

*United States of America must I think be placed upon the coin. In regard to the other inscriptions I would gladly have the expression of the opinion of the Director.*





**Charles Barber: Plaster Casts of Two Isabella Busts (one representing her as a young queen and the other as a mature queen-LG). Courtesy *The Fair Women*, by Jeanne Madeline Weimann, Chicago Academy publishers, 1981, p. 480.**

Mr. Bosbyshell agreed that a motif of some kind would be better than 'reading matter.' When Caroline Peddle's Isabella sketch arrived in Philadelphia, both Mr. Barber and Mr. Bosbyshell disliked it. Mr. Bosbyshell wrote to Mr. Leech in Washington:

*We think here a head would be very much better than a sitting figure. Arranged as Miss Peddle has it, it would scarcely have any significance at all reduced to the size of a quarter. The foreshortening of the limbs from the waist to the knees would be very unsatisfactory.*

Miss Peddle was informed by the Mint that their engravers would do the reverse. She was much put out by this high-handed attitude, and the lack of guidance. She announced that in that case she would cease work on the obverse because she 'could not consent to do half a piece of work.'

She telegraphed a similar sentiment to Mrs. Palmer, who had anxiously been awaiting word of progress. Mrs. Palmer wrote her, 'I was exceedingly sorry to infer from your telegram that little or nothing had been done.' She told Director Leech that she thought it 'most unfortunate' that he; she and Miss Peddle were 'at three points of a triangle, instead of having come together for full and satisfactory conference to decide finally about the design, finish and inscription of the proposed coin.' Now time was growing short and with it Mrs. Palmer's temper. She wrote Miss Peddle:

*It will require two months to make the dies after the model is finished. We must have the coin by the first of June or we will lose the opportunity to make the sales necessary during the Exposition, and consequently I have counted upon you to give it to the authorities as soon after the first of April as possible.*

She asked Sara Hallowell to go and see Miss Peddle; she urged 'conciliation' upon the Mint. Director:

Leech's response was a letter telling Caroline Peddle that she could model the reverse from Mr. Barber's design. However this peace offering was cancelled by an enclosure from Mr. Bosbyshell:

*You notice that the Director desires that you should model a head of Queen Isabella from the best portrait you can obtain. This head should be without a crown, as a crowned head on an American coin would, in my judgment be exceedingly unpopular and offensive to the teachings of our republican institutions. Isabella should be represented as the patron of Columbus and not as a Queen, according to my notion.*

*Our engraver is modeling a reverse for the inspection of the Director and Secretary so that if acceptable to them I do not think it would be necessary for you to remodel it as suggested in the Director's letter. Anything we can do here to assist you will be cheerfully done.*

Mr. Barber wrote Mr. Bosbyshell on April 8, to demolish the Ladies' suggestion for the reverse:

*I am not in favor of using any building for a coin, coin relief being too low and consequently unsuitable for the proper display of buildings.*

*The building being a long low structure I fear to use it in its entirety.*

*It would look a mere streak across the coin.*

*To show you what I think would be the appearance of this building on a coin I enclose a medal with a very similar building and on a piece of about the same size.*

Neither Mr. Barber's nor Mr. Bosbyshell's comments were mentioned in the conciliatory telegram sent by Director Leech to Mrs. Palmer on April 8:

*Miss Peddle has been instructed that she can proceed to model the head of Isabella and certain lettering for the obverse or face of the souvenir quarter. The design for the reverse will be prepared by the designer of the Mint, that is a sketch will be submitted to me and if approved by the Secretary, will be -- forwarded to your for your opinion. Miss Peddle can then make the model of the reverse, if you care to have her do so.*



Charles Barber: Rough sketch of Women's Building for Isabella Quarter. Courtesy *The Fair Women*, by Jeanne Madeline Weimann, Chicago Academy publishers, 1981, p. 480.

Miss Peddle, under the impression that the Mint refused to allow her to model the reverse of the coin, sent her official resignation to Mr. Leech, who immediately fired off another telegram to Mrs. Palmer:

*Miss Peddle declines to model souvenir quarter. Please request her to forward head of Isabella which you have selected for obverse to Mint at Philadelphia and I will have model prepared and forwarded to your for your examination and will also have a model of reverse of coin forwarded to you. This will save considerable time.*

Mrs. Palmer was exceedingly angry at Caroline Peddle. She wrote to St. Gaudens that she was 'very much annoyed with Miss Peddle and her action.' She enclosed the two recent telegrams from Director Leech as proof that Miss Peddle had 'frustrated' their plans. She also found fault with the young artist's manners:

*I consider it a direct discourtesy to me for Miss Peddle to have ever communicated directly with the Treasury Department.*

*She was engaged by us to do this modeling and her communicating with Mr. Leech and arranging terms with him or anything else was in very bad form and by ill advised action, she has not only injured herself and deprived herself of what would have been a beautiful opportunity, but she has given a blow to. . . having recognition given to women in every department of the Exposition. I feel it very keenly because it has been necessary to use some diplomacy in order to secure consent for a woman to model the model.*

*I do not write directly to Miss Peddle because I feel annoyed with her and simply wish to explain to you that the whole matter was arranged and we were quite able to take care of ourselves and take care of Miss Peddle, and the result is not because of any failure on our part, but because of Miss Peddle's unwise action.*

Mrs. Palmer's annoyance was increased when St. Gaudens replied that he knew of the resignation already, and had sanctioned it:

*I am very much annoyed at the turn things are taking but when Miss Peddle told me the reverse of the medal was to be modeled by the incompetent designers at the Mint I agreed with her that it would be more dignified to refuse.*

The Mint had successfully fended off Mrs. Palmer's artist. Director Leech wired Mrs. Palmer on April 21 to give him the exact wording she required for the inscription on the coin, 'omitting the distinction of sex, which the Secretary told is improper on a coin of the United States.' He wished the words 'Board of Lady Managers' to be dropped. Mrs. Palmer had no intention of allowing this: she appealed to Secretary Carlisle, who gave permission for 'Board of Lady Managers' to circle the coin.



Sketches by Charles Barber of heraldic eagle reverse. Taxay p. 7.

Instead of the Woman's Building, Charles Barber offered a design for the reverse shield emblazoned with the American eagle, encircled by a wreath of oak leaves. Mr. Leech, possibly foreseeing Mrs. Palmer's reaction, vetoed this idea. He preferred an earlier design of Barber's: the full figure of kneeling woman winding flax on a spindle.

In her hand she held a distaff which, as Director Leech explained to Mrs. Palmer, 'is used in art to symbolize patient industry, and especially the industry of women.' Mrs. Palmer approved the sketch. For the obverse the Mint chose a head of a young Isabella wearing a crown. It was 'impossible', they said, 'to properly represent Isabella from the engraving furnished without a crown.' Mrs. Palmer approved that too.

All difficulties melted away when the Mint's engravers were allowed to work directly with the Board. Director Leech was delighted with the designs. He told Mrs. Palmer that he felt quite sure 'that the designs selected will be both suitable and artistic and will make a very beautiful coin.' The Columbian half-dollar had suffered from the sacrifice of high relief to considerations of economy; Leech promised this would not happen with the Isabella quarter. It would be 'struck especially, in as high relief as possible—and on polished plauchets [*sic*], so as to give as beautiful a lot of coins as the mint is capable of executing...'”<sup>4</sup>

*“To the Board of Lady Managers:*

LADIES: . . . The souvenir coins accorded to the Board of Lady Managers will shortly be delivered in Chicago. An enormous amount of correspondence with regard to them has been most systematically carried on up to this time by Mrs. Clara M. Doolittle, who has registered the paid and unpaid orders. The Merchants' Loan & Trust Company's Bank having offered to handle these coins without expense to us, unless the amount of correspondence became so great as to necessitate a special clerk, we were glad to turn the matter over to them, as the responsibility of handling the coin is a great one, and involves the employment of an expensive corps of responsible and trained assistants.

The orders for which we have received the money will be filled first and then in turn the registered orders which are unpaid. Those who have subscribed and sent money for the payment of souvenir coins can transmit their receipts to the Merchants' Loan & Trust Company's Bank, Chicago, with the amount necessary for the prepayment of the express charges, and the coin will be forwarded to them. Those who wish to purchase coins can transmit their order through their own bank, which will secure the coin for them. Orders received after this time will be registered and the coin delivered promptly to each applicant. Persons residing out of the city can give their order to their own bank, which will send it to their Chicago correspondents, and the required number of coins will be forwarded to each individual. This simplifies our plan for delivery, and makes it possible for us to take large quantities instead of retailing them through special agents established all over the country. This would be an expensive and difficult service, as we would have to guarantee the honesty and capability of each one of our agents.

I have no knowledge of the use to which the Board will decide to put the proceeds of the sale of this coin, the money for which will probably not be in hand until the end of the Exposition or later. I shall simply hold the revenue from the sale of the coin in trust for the Board until such time as a decision is arrived at by it as to how the proceeds shall be disposed of.

Respectfully submitted,

BERTHA HONORÉ PALMER  
*President Board of Lady Managers,*

July 7, 1893”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Mementoes of an Emancipated Era. Courtesy of *The Fair Women*, by Jeanne Madeline Weimann, Chicago Academy Publishers, 1981, p. 478-484.

<sup>5</sup> *Addresses and Reports of Mrs. Potter Palmer President of the Board of Lady Managers, World's Columbian Commission. Report to the Board of Lady Managers, Fifth Session, Woman's Building, July 7, 1893. Chicago, Rand, McNally & Company, 1894, p. 147-148.*



*"To the Members of the Executive Committee:*

LADIES:. . . The sale of the Isabella coins has not been active during the depression of the past winter. The sign of the reviving times in the spring was immediately indicated by the renewed demand for them. Through the kindness of our honored member, Mrs. James R. Deane of California, they have been placed upon sale at the Midwinter Fair without commission, and we have a saleswoman, established in a favorable locality, who devotes her entire time and attention to the sale of these coins. Mrs. Deane reports that the sale is not so great as if the price was less, but, as the demand continues at the price already established, it seems unwise at this moment, in the face of renewed demand and more prosperous times, to make a reduction. I append a report of the sales from the beginning:

At the time of the meeting of the Board I was authorized to sell the first coin for \$500. President Higginbotham wanted the set of four for the Columbian Museum, as he had already procured for it the four similar Columbian half-dollars, and he offered more for the first quarter than the previous bid. Thinking that they would sell better as a set, I wrote to Professor Kunz of New York, who is a prominent member of the Numismatic Association of the United States, to get the names of the best-known collectors, so that I might send them a circular asking for bids for the set of coins. I will quote Professor Kunz's reply, and beg this committee to express its wish in the matter:

But after all this, the Ladies themselves did not like the coin. They did not think the image of a woman on her knees holding a distaff was a promising symbol of the New Woman. *The American Journal of Numismatics* had not liked the Columbian half-dollar, and it did not like the Isabella quarter:

*"To the Members of the Executive Committee:*

LADIES:. . . The sale of the Isabella coins has not been active during the depression of the past winter. The sign of the reviving times in the spring was immediately indicated by the renewed demand for them. Through the kindness of our honored member, Mrs. James R. Deane of California, they have been placed upon sale at the Midwinter Fair without commission, and we have a saleswoman, established in a favorable locality, who devotes her entire time and attention to the sale of these coins. Mrs. Deane reports that the sale is not so great as if the price was less, but, as the demand continues at the price already established, it seems unwise at this moment, in the face of renewed demand and more prosperous times, to make a reduction. I append a report of the sales from the beginning:

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New York, May 14, 1894

Mrs. Potter Palmer, *President Board of Lady Managers,*  
*World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, Ill.:*

DEAR MADAM: In response to your esteemed favor of the eleventh instant, after carefully considering your query in regard to the first, four hundredth, fourteen hundred and ninety-second, and eighteen hundred and ninety-second Isabella quarter dollars, believe the coins ought to be put on exhibition at some prominent place in New York; that for a period of three months bids be received, and that promptly at the close of that time the coins be delivered to the highest bidder.

I have spoken with the Tiffany people about it, and they agree that they would exhibit the coins for you in a special case, keep a record of the bids, and deliver the coins upon the receipt of the price, and turn the full amount over to your fund, without any commission.

In the meantime, they will do what they can to interest bidders, and the Lady Managers will do the same, of course, so as to obtain the greatest publicity for the bids, which I am sure one or more papers in each city would publish for you, say on Monday or Saturday of each week.

I will also do all I can with collectors and others. Kindly advise me of your decision soon, so that I can fully arrange everything before I leave for Chicago, about the end of the month, finally place the gems of the Field Columbian Museum.

Believe me, very truly yours,

George F. Kunz

Respectfully submitted,

BERTHA HONORÈ PALMER  
*President Board of Lady Managers*

May 15, 1894”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Addresses and Reports of Mrs. Potter Palmer President of the Board of Lady Managers, World's Columbian Commission. Report to the Executive Committee of the Board of Lady Managers, May 15, 1894. Chicago, Rand, McNally & Company, 1894, p. 196-199.*

# STATEMENT OF ISABELLA COIN ACCOUNT

Cash received for coins sold . . . . .	\$20,180 00
Cash received for coin holders sold . . . . .	56 05
Cash received from Mrs. Doolittle for coins not yet called for . . . . .	27 00
Cash received for interest from banks . . . . .	170 60

Total cash received . . . . . \$20,433 65

Paid out for expenses to date . . . . .	\$ 692 29
Paid Sub-Treasurer for 24,191 coins . . . . .	6,047 90
Paid A. Zorn . . . . .	3,000 00
Paid L. Taft . . . . .	147 00
Cash balance with Illinois Trust & Savings Bank . . . . .	4,434 12
Cash balance with the Merchants Loan & Trust Co. . . . .	6,112 34

Total . . . . . \$20,433 65

## ITEMIZED STATEMENT OF EXPENSE ACCOUNT.

Wages paid salesgirls . . . . .	\$298 00
Oxidizing and cleaning soiled coins . . . . .	25 47
Display cards in Woman's Building . . . . .	13 50
Boxes and mailing cases . . . . .	2 25
Exchange charged by Northern Trust Company for transferring balance to down-town bank . . . . .	5 00
Bars and holders for coins for pages . . . . .	15 25
Two show cases . . . . .	35 00
Express charges on coins sent to banks for sale . . . . .	20 40
Printing circulars . . . . .	12 00
Mrs. J. R. Deane, San Francisco, expenses . . . . .	32 45

\$459 32

Less amount received for postage . . . . . 1 21

\$458 11

## STATEMENT OF ISABELLA COIN ACCOUNT.

Total number of coins sold . . . . .	20,180
Coins for Lady Managers and alternates . . . . .	232
Coins for pages . . . . .	13
Coins for judges . . . . .	100
On sale with Marshall Field & Co. . . . .	64

On sale with Tiffany & Co., New York . . . . .	100
“ “ Union Banking Company, Nashville, Tenn. . . . .	100
“ “ Anglo-California Bank, San Francisco, Cal. . . . .	977
“ “ East Tennessee National Bank, Knoxville,	25
“ “ National Bank of the Republic, Philadel- phia . . . . .	100
“ “ J. E. Caldwell & Co. . . . .	100
“ “ Allegheny National Bank, Pittsburg, Pa.	100
“ “ National Bank of Battle Creek, Mich. . .	10
“ “ Union National Bank, Wilmington, Del. .	100
“ “ New Orleans Canal & Banking Co. . . .	50
“ “ R. J. Mercer, jeweler, Kansas City, Mo. .	50
“ “ J. H. Raymond & Co., Austin, Tex. . . .	100
“ “ First National Bank, Harrisonburg, Va. .	50
“ “ First National Bank, Santa Fé, N. M. . .	100
“ “ First National Bank, Ann Arbor, Mich. .	50
“ “ Houston Bank, Houston, Tex. . . . .	100
“ “ L. C. Roessler, jeweler, Cumberland, Md. .	25
“ “ First National Bank, Pueblo, Colo. . . .	50
“ “ Denver National Bank, Denver, Colo. . .	100
“ “ Worcester County Institution for Savings, Worcester . . . . .	12
“ “ Board of Lady Managers . . . . .	100
“ “ Merchants Loan & Trust Co. . . . .	1,203

CHICAGO, ILL., May 4, 1894.

24,191

*Addresses and Reports of Mrs. Potter Palmer, President of the Board of Lady Managers, World's Columbian Commission, Complete Edition, Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894, p. 198. Published by the Board of Lady Managers of the world's Columbian Commission, under the authority of the following resolution of the Executive Committee of the Board, offered by Mrs. Frances Welles Shepard of Chicago, and adopted November 8, 1893: Resolved, That all addresses and reports of the President of the Board of Lady Managers be bound in suitable and durable binding, and a copy of the same sent to every principal and alternate of the Board.*

## The Last Restrikes

Our story of novodels, restrikes, off-metal patterns and mules comes to its close with a strange and unique event. This seems appropriate given the overlapping confusion, inconsistency, good intentions, and self-dealing of the previous decades.

In simplest terms, the Philadelphia Mint was ordered to restrike 14,000 1893-date Isabella commemorative quarters – in 1896. Why this was necessary is as much testament to excessive optimism of the Columbian Exposition commemorative coin program sponsors, as it was of miscommunication and confusion.

A coin honoring the accomplishments of women was an important goal of the Board of Lady Managers. It was as much a symbol of the modern role of women in America, as was Columbus of the traditional role of men. Given the unusual restriking situation it is useful to present additional background on the project.<sup>1</sup>

The Columbian Exposition had a Board of Lady Managers sanctioned by Congress to control how women would be involved in the fair. Two groups of women pushed for ideological control of this influential organization. The “Chicago Women’s Auxiliary” consisted of wealthy and prominent Chicago women who were involved with the city’s philanthropic organizations. While they generally advocated for the expansion of women’s rights, they did so using justification within the confines of femininity. They believed that women should not be confined to domestic duties, but at the same time their pursuits should remain womanly and in line with feminine virtues. They encouraged women to be active in reform movements, education, and art. Their goal for the Exposition was to construct a Woman’s Pavilion to separate women’s contributions from those of men.<sup>2</sup>

A competing group was known as “The Queen Isabella Association.” These women advocated for escape from the confines of domesticated feminine virtues altogether. They were mainly suffragists who preferred to fight for the vote for women rather than reform movements. They tended to be professional women and were found in other cities outside of Chicago. They got their name from their desire to recognize Queen Isabella for her contributions to the founding of the New World. They were opposed to the creation of a separate Woman’s Pavilion at the Exposition, instead pushing for women’s works to be included throughout the Exposition - right alongside men’s.<sup>3</sup>

When President Benjamin Harrison signed into law a bill establishing Chicago as the site for the Exposition on April 25, 1890, it provided for two all-male governing bodies called the National Commission and the Chicago Directory to preside over the Exposition. These included a number of wealthy and influential Chicago businessmen. The bill also included an amendment that established the Board of Lady Managers, to be appointed by the National Commission. Its purpose was to oversee all matters pertaining to women’s work at the Exposition. This recognition of women’s ability to contribute to the planning of the Exposition was largely due to the lobbying efforts of several prominent women such as Susan B. Anthony and Myra Bradwell,

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<sup>1</sup> Background information and references were supplied by author Lee Gast from his research book *Classic Commemorative Coins*. The present author gratefully acknowledges Mr. Gast’s generous assistance.

<sup>2</sup> Maxwell, Lauren Alexander, “Constructions of Femininity: Women and the World’s Columbian Exposition” (2009). *Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection*. 40. <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses/40>. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women*. Academy Chicago: Chicago, Illinois, 1981. 28.

though they had hoped to secure appointments of women to the National Commission and the Directory, not the establishment of a separate and sex-segregated board.<sup>4</sup>

At the first meeting of the Board of Lady Managers, November 18, 1890, Mrs. Bertha Honoré Palmer<sup>5</sup> was elected president of the Board of Lady Managers.<sup>6</sup> Her ideas were largely those of the "Chicago Women's Auxiliary" and actively blocked the Isabellas' influence. This approach was advantageous when Congress was asked to appropriate funds for the Board of Lady Managers since it aligned with that of most members of the Senate.

"During the October 1892 session of the Board of Lady Managers, Mrs. John A. Logan presented a motion asking Congress for a special souvenir coin for the Woman's Board. The suggestion was generally approved."<sup>7</sup>

On December 10 the Sub-executive Committee of the Board of Lady Managers adopted a resolution, previously presented at the third session of the Board, requesting to receive \$10,000 or more of their appropriation for the next fiscal year, beginning July 1, 1893, in souvenir coins of the denomination of twenty-five cents.<sup>8</sup> The Senate approved an appropriation of \$98,100 on February 14, 1893 for the lady managers which included \$10,000 to be paid in souvenir quarters of a design chosen by the Board.<sup>9</sup> Mrs. Palmer's regal presence in the Senate gallery was described by a reporter for the New York *Sun* newspaper:



Mrs. Palmer sat like a queen on her throne in the front row of the gallery reserved for Democratic Senator's families. She had a copy of the Sundry Civil bill, and it was spread out about her on the rail.... All the Senators present knew that Mrs. Palmer was in the gallery, and they frequently glanced up at her as she gracefully smiled down upon them. The result was that all the World's Fair amendments went through without a murmur of objection, and even Senator Quay, who had been selected to champion the proposition...that the Fair should be closed on Sundays, [fell] under the spell of Mrs. Palmer...withdrew his amendment. As soon as the World's Fair sections of the bill were disposed of, Mrs. Palmer and her friend arose, saluted the Senators collectively, and

<sup>4</sup> Maxwell. 9-10. Referencing Weimann, 33, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Anders Zorn. *Portrait Mrs. Potter Palmer*. Oil on canvas; 1893. Private Collection. The Board of Lady Managers paid \$3,000 for the portrait which was presented to Mrs. Palmer.

<sup>6</sup> Maxwell. 15-17.

<sup>7</sup> *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, Women's Department, Local Notes. The Board of Lady Managers, November, 1892. 210.

<sup>8</sup> Rossiter Johnson, ed. *A History of the World's Columbian Exposition*, held in Chicago in 1893, by Authority of the Board of Directors. D. Appleton & Co. 1897. 225.

<sup>9</sup> "Money of the World's Fair," *The World*, February 15, 1893. 4.



departed.<sup>10</sup>

Designs for the commemorative quarter generated their own melodrama and intrigue, culminating in production of the coins on June 13. Promptly at 1 o'clock PM Coining Room Foreman Al Downing and a helper turned the fly wheel of a toggle press and struck the first Isabella quarter. Acting Superintendent Martin H. Cobb, Coiner William S. Steele, and Engraver Charles E. Barber supervised the event in the presence of Philadelphia newspaper reporters.

Mrs. Palmer described the design in an earlier report.

It will bear on the obverse side a portrait of Queen Isabella, surrounded by the words, "United States of America," and on the reverse, a figure in relief symbolic of woman's industries. The design for this figure we did not consider typical of the woman of the present day, as the woman is represented kneeling, with a distaff in her hands, but the necessity for haste forced us, while recording our objection, to ask that the minting of the coin be proceeded with without waiting for other sketches.<sup>11</sup>

Coins were sold at the Women's Building on the exhibition grounds for \$1.00 each, and by mail through Merchants' Loan & Trust Company's Bank, Chicago for the same plus an express fee. The customary pronouncements of excellent advance sales were made and tossed about with little regard for facts. This mention in the April issue of *American Journal of Numismatics* was typical.

The Isabella coin, as the souvenir Quarter dollar to be issued for the Board of Lady Managers of the Columbian Exposition is called, is promised to be in readiness for distribution in June. Already orders for lots from ten to five hundred are daily being received at the Woman's Building in Chicago. As there are to be only 40,000 of these coins, the prospect is that most of them will be disposed of before the first one is issued from the Mint.

It was at first planned to sell these souvenir Quarters for \$1 apiece. At this price the Board of Lady Managers would realize \$40,000 in addition to the \$10,000 of the appropriation made by Congress. But as the present demand indicates that the limited supply will be quite insufficient, and as no definite price has yet been fixed, it is possible that the coins will be sold for more than \$1.<sup>12</sup>

As agreed in advance, the first through fifth, and 400th, 1492nd, and 1892nd pieces were reserved with certificates signed by Cobb. These were sent to the Chicago Sub-Treasury for the Board of Lady Managers in Chicago. The first coin and the last three mentioned were supposed to be auctioned and the Board claimed to have an offer of \$500 for coin number 1. Mrs. Palmer claimed that "Bankers in this city think that the demand for them has been so great that it will be necessary to raise the price...as the supply will not be equal to the demand."<sup>13</sup>

But such prognostication proved unfounded. By October 28, Women's Day at the Exposition, it was hoped that women would buy the quarters as a souvenir of the event and as "being the first coin ever struck for the special benefit of women."<sup>14</sup> In December, Chicago jewelers were reported offering the souvenir quarters for sale.<sup>15</sup> Bertha Palmer seemed to blame poor sales on economic conditions, "The sale of the Isabella coins has not been active during the

<sup>10</sup> "Live Washington Topics," *The Sun*, February 16, 1863. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Bertha Honoré Palmer. *Addresses and Reports of Mrs. Potter Palmer, President of the Board of Lady Managers, World's Columbian Commission*. "Report to the Board of Lady Managers, Fourth Session, Woman's Building, April 26, 1893." Rand, McNally & Company. Chicago. 1894. 123.

<sup>12</sup> "Isabella Coins," *American Journal of Numismatics*, April 1893. 81.

<sup>13</sup> "Demand for Souvenir Quarters," *Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1893. 1.

<sup>14</sup> "Program for Woman's Day," *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago), October 28, 1893. 5.

<sup>15</sup> "Queries and Answers," *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 1893. 14.

depression of the past winter.”<sup>16</sup>

The Board had called for 24,191 coins through May 14, 1894, but made no further demand on the Chicago Sub-Treasury, which held the quarters.<sup>17</sup> In September, Chicago Assistant Treasurer Delos P. Phelps shipped the coins back to the Philadelphia Mint for safekeeping. This was consistent with handling of excess Columbia half dollars. However, it appears that a clerk accidentally labeled the Isabella quarters “uncurrent silver coin,” which told the Philadelphia Mint receiving clerk to treat the coins like bullion and recoin them into current subsidiary silver.

1894 Silver Coin for Recoinage			
Aug- 30	To Net Proceeds Uncurrent Sil. Coin rec'd for Recg from A.T. U. S. Phila. Co.		
" "	on T.O. #26140 - Transferred to Bullion Fund. Ross # 16,419.45	\$270,240.55	
" 31	To Balance per Transcript #996	19,367.81	
		<u>\$289,608.36</u>	
Sept 5	To Net Proceeds Uncurrent Sil. Coin rec'd for Recg from A.T. U. S. New York & U.		
" "	on T.O. #26159 - Transferred to Bullion Fund. Ross # 28,589.56	\$418,410.44	
" 8	To Balance per Transcript #997	47,957.37	
		<u>466,367.81</u>	
Sept. 10	To Net Proceeds Uncurrent Sil. Coin (Columbian Quarter Dolls) rec'd for Recg		
" "	from A.T. U. S. Chicago Ill. on T.O. #26198 - Transferred to Bullion Fund	\$3,952.25	
" 12	To Net Proceeds Uncurrent Sil. Coin rec'd for Recg from A.T. U. S. Boston Mass.		
" "	on T.O. #26177 - Transferred to Bullion Fund - Ross # 10,338.04	232,725.84	
" 15	To Balance per Transcript # 998	58,295.41	
		<u>294,973.50</u>	

Figure 1. Detail from Recoinage Journal, August-September 1894 showing receipt for Isabella quarters for recoinage on September 10, 1894. The value of \$3,952.25 equaled 15,809 coins. The journal entry reads: “Sept. 10. To Net Proceeds Uncurrent Sil. Coin (Columbian Quarter Dolls) received for Recg [recoining] from A.T. U. S. Chicago, Ill in T. O. #26198 – Transferred to Bullion Fund. \$3,952.25.” [RG104 Entry 73 Box 1 Recoinage.]

The Isabella quarters were promptly melted along with other uncurrent silver coins received from Boston two days later. There was no necessity to notify Mrs. Palmer or anyone else of the coins’ disposition. That was the end of the matter as far as the Chicago Sub-Treasury and Philadelphia Mint were concerned.

But Mrs. Palmer was anxious to sell the special coins that had been reserved in June 1893 and contacted mint director Robert E. Preston. She wanted the most significant four of them sent

<sup>16</sup> Bertha Honoré Palmer. *Addresses and Reports of Mrs. Potter Palmer, President of the Board of Lady Managers, World's Columbian Commission*. Rand, McNally & Company. Chicago. 1894. 196.

<sup>17</sup> Bertha Honoré Palmer. *Addresses and Reports of Mrs. Potter Palmer, President of the Board of Lady Managers, World's Columbian Commission*. “Statement of Isabella Coin Account, May 4, 1894.” Rand, McNally & Company. Chicago. 1894. 197-198.

to George F. Kunz at Tiffany & Co. so they could be sold at a premium. As noted above the coins and certificates were sent to the Chicago Sub-Treasury for the Board's use, but had not been called for by the time remaining quarters were labeled "uncurrent" and returned to Philadelphia. Preston asked about the special coins on September 17, 1894.

It appears that in the shipment of the Isabella Quarters to you from Chicago, eight pieces, which it was intended should be delivered to Mrs. Potter Palmer, were embraced. These are the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th and the 400th, 1492nd and 1892nd, which I understand were accompanied by the certificate of the late Superintendent of the Mint, O.C. Bosbyshell, and by which they can be identified.

I have to request that in case these coins have not been melted, that you will select out of the lot, the 1st, 400th, 1492nd and 1892nd, and forward the same, per registered mail, to Professor Kunz, care of Tiffany & Co., Union Square, New York, and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th, to Mrs. Bertha Honore Palmer, Chicago, Illinois.

The certificate of your predecessor should be forwarded with these coins. Enclosed herewith find check for two dollars (\$2.00) in payment of the same.<sup>18</sup>

Preston noted that these eight special coins were evidently part of the uncurrent batch sent to Philadelphia, and they should be separated, along with their certificates, from the rest of the quarters. Coins number 1, 300, 1492 and 1892 were to be sent to Kunz at Tiffany's, and numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5 sent to Mrs. Palmer. All, of course, provided they had not been melted. But, recoinage journal entries for September 10 and 12 show that all 15,809 Isabella quarters had been melted. This was later confirmed by a copy of the original Transfer Order (T.O.) showing the coins were destroyed.

T.O.  
No. 26198

U. S. Mint Service—Form No. 44.

Mint U. S. at Philadelphia.

Uncurrent Coin  
MEMORANDUM OF SILVER, ~~QUARTERS~~ deposited on the 10<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>, 1894 in amount of purchase made by Aust. Messrs. S. Chicago  
from \_\_\_\_\_ at \$1.24+ per piece.

NOTE.—This Memorandum is for the information of the Seller, and is of no other value.

DESCRIPTION OF BULLION.	WEIGHT.				VALUE OF THE SILVER.				GROSS PARTS FROM THE SILVER.				CHARGES.				NET VALUE.			
	BEFORE MELTING.		AFTER MELTING.		FINERNESS.		TOLERANCE.		FINERNESS.		TOLERANCE.		DOLLARS.		CENTS.		DOLLARS.		CENTS.	
	Ounces.	Dec.	Ounces.	Dec.	100ths.	Dollars.	Cents.	100ths.	Dollars.	Cents.	Dollars.	Cents.	Dollars.	Cents.	Dollars.	Cents.				
Columbian Quarter Dollars	31.76	62	31.76	62	900	3952	25										3952	25		
Tale balance	\$3.952	25																		
Net	3.952	25																		

[Pl. 5-25-93-1,000] 2-455

RG 104 entry 229 box 081

E. L. Rogers  
For Superintendent.

Figure 2. Duplicate of original September 10, 1894 showing disposition of remaining Isabella quarters. (RG104 E229 Box 81.)

Melting of the eight special coins created a problem for Mrs. Palmer. She had arranged through George Kunz for Tiffany's to display the special coins and certificates in its New York show room, to track bids for the coins, collect the winning payment, and deliver the coins. Now,

<sup>18</sup> RG104 E-1 Box 187. Letter dated September 17, 1894 to Eugene Townsend, Superintendent from Preston.

the special coins were gone along with the expected additional revenue.<sup>19</sup>

Mrs. Palmer learned that the coins had been destroyed sometime in mid-September and wrote to William Eleroy Curtis, a friend in Washington, D.C.<sup>20</sup>

I am shocked that any of the coins were sent to Philadelphia and remelted. We have had the funds for a long time to withdraw them, but considered them absolutely safe in the sub-Treasury, and as it was an unfortunate time to advertise and attempt to sell them, we have waited for brighter days....

I do not like the odd amount now remaining; there were originally 40,000 coins minted; of these you say you have remelted the value of \$950.25, which would make 3825 coins. This subtracted from 40,000 leaves 36,175. We wish to state how many were issued, and as this is a very odd amount, I think the 175 had also better be put in the melting pot, leaving only a round number of 36,000.<sup>21</sup>

The next day Mrs. Palmer wrote again to Curtis asking that no more coins be melted and saying it was "too embarrassing to make a statement concerning the remelting of these coins."

She also complained to the Treasury Department, who investigated and found that as of early 1895 there were:

- 1,439 quarters at the Merchant's Loan and Trust Company Bank in Chicago,
- 300 remained from the California Midwinter International Exposition of 1894 (held by Anglo-California Bank in San Francisco for sale by Mrs. James R. Deane),
- 345 given as mementoes to the Exposition judges, pages and Lady Managers,
- 100 had been stolen, and
- 22,007 had been sold for one dollar each.

Payment had been made to the Treasury for 24,191 coins leaving an unaccounted-for balance of 15,809.<sup>22</sup> This exactly matched the quantity melted in September 1894.

On October 18, 1894 the Merchant's Loan and Trust Co., acting on behalf of Palmer, sent an order to the Philadelphia Mint for 12,000 Isabella quarters (\$3,000) for the Board of Lady Manager's account. Superintendent Townsend contacted director Preston for instructions and was eventually told:

You will please return to the Merchant's Loan and Trust Co., of Chicago, the draft for \$3,000, received from them with the request that you would forward a like amount in Isabella Quarter-dollars.

These coins will probably be transferred to the Treasury in the course of a few days.<sup>23</sup>

This only expanded the confusion. The Mint had no Isabella quarters. The mint director evidently did not realize this and had ordered his Philadelphia Mint Superintendent to tell Merchant's Loan and Trust Co. they would be transferred.

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<sup>19</sup> Author Lee Gast emailed Tiffany's asking about this. Their reply was they never had the four special coins intended for Kunz, and there was no display or sale of them.

<sup>20</sup> William Eleroy Curtis was Director of the Bureau of the American Republics and Chief of the Latin-American Bureau, World's Columbian Exposition.

<sup>21</sup> Jeanne Madeline Weimann. *The Fair Women* "Mementoes of an Emancipated Era." Letter dated November 1, 1894. Chicago Academy Publishers, 1981. 477-484. There are obvious discrepancies in quantities mentioned by Palmer.

<sup>22</sup> Jeanne Madeline Weimann. *The Fair Women* "Mementoes of an Emancipated Era." Chicago Academy Publishers, 1981. 477-484. Data corrected by the author.

<sup>23</sup> RG104 E-1, Box 188. Letter dated November 9, 1894 to Townsend from Preston.

On December 26, 1895 Logan Carlisle, Chief Clerk for Secretary of the Treasury John G. Carlisle, wrote to the Philadelphia Mint asking how many Isabella quarters remained at the Mint. The reply was that \$425 (1,700 pieces) were at the mint.<sup>24</sup>

It appears that considerable back-and-forth communication occurred between Palmer and secretary Carlisle. On April 15, 1896 Merchant's Loan and Trust Co. sent two Treasury Settlement Warrants to Philadelphia and asked that all \$425 in Isabella quarters be shipped to them or to Mrs. Palmer. Two weeks later mint director Preston, under orders from Carlisle, sent the following to the Philadelphia Mint.

You are hereby authorized and instructed to cause thirty-five hundred dollars (\$3,500.) in Isabella Quarters to be coined as early as practicable to replace the amount of such coins estimated to have been melted.

I have this day requested that a transfer be made from the Bullion Fund of your Mint to the Treasurer of the United States of the sum of \$3,336.25, payable in Isabella Quarters, and that the same be shipped to the Assistant Treasurer of the U.S. at Chicago, the remaining \$163.75 to be held subject to future orders.<sup>25</sup>

Preston's order meant that 1,700 (\$425) plus 14,000 (\$3,500) restrike Isabella quarters totaling 15,700 were available. (The original quantity melted was 15,809 pieces) Of this amount, 13,324 (\$3,336.25) restrikes and 1,700 (\$425) original pieces totaling 15,045 (\$3,761.25) were to go to Chicago, and 655 (\$163.75) would be kept in Philadelphia to cover any damaged coins and for possible future use.

We don't know how the restrike quantity was determined, or reasons for odd amounts shipped to Chicago. We believe Mrs. Palmer wholesaled the last batch of coins for forty to fifty cents each, or whatever she could get, but we can't be certain.

This last confused and twisted episode of coin restriking stands as a fine exemplar for past decades of much the same.

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<sup>24</sup> The source of these coins is unknown. They might have been held back from remelting, but that would be reported in the transfer order disposition.

<sup>25</sup> RG104 E-1 Box 193. Letter dated May 2, 1896 to Herman Kretz, Superintendent from Preston.

## Roger Burdette Post on the NGC Coin Forum

RWB Member: Seasoned Veteran, 16,088 posts, Joined: January 3, 2005, Location: Virginia

Posted Tuesday at 08:42 PM (edited)

A collector wrote asking how many Isabella quarters were struck as proofs.

The straight answer is: -0-

All Isabella quarters, from first through 40,023rd were made on the afternoon of June 13, 1893, using a standard toggle press. Coins #1-5 were struck by turning the press' flywheel manually, something easily done with a toggle press and impossible with a hydraulic medal press. The cycle counter on the press was used to identify the 400th, 1492nd, and 1892nd pieces, and these plus the first five were certified by Acting Superintendent Martin H. Cobb.

A toggle press delivers the same pressure regardless of how it is actuated – manually, by steam, by electric motor, by a cavalcade of trained ants, etc. Edited Tuesday at 08:46 PM by RWB

Fenntucky Mike

Quote: EARLY-COMMEM-HUNTER, Member, 18 posts, Joined: October 15. Posted Wednesday at 12:20 AM (edited)

“Authorized: 40,000  
Coined: 40,000 + 23 assay  
Melted: 15,809  
Net Mintage: 24,191”

“It appears that 103 of these were proofs: the first 100 and nos. 400, 1492 and 1892. That gives us 24,088 business strikes in addition to the 103 proofs.” (Swiatek & Breen, 1990, p.115).

Swiatek, A. & Breen, W. (1990). The Encyclopedia of United States Silver & Gold Commemorative Coins 1892-1989. Arco Publishing, Inc. NY.

\* Not to be duplicative, but here's my recent business strike Isabella acquisition. I simply adore this piece. Edited Wednesday at 12:22 AM by EARLY-COMMEM-HUNTER

Quote: VKurtB, Member: Seasoned Veteran, 4,516 posts, Joined: June 22, 2015. Location: Butt: Northern Alabama, Mind: South Central Pennsylvania. Posted Wednesday at 01:27 AM

Uh, oh. Weasel word warning. “It appears”. Danger, danger Will Robinson. Weasel words from Swiatek and Breen. Whodathunkit.?

Quote RWB

Posted Wednesday at 10:34 AM (edited)

EARLY-COMMEM-HUNTER - Thanks for the added information. Newer research makes the reference you gave largely obsolete.

On 10/20/2021 at 12:20 AM, EARLY-COMMEM-HUNTER said:

“Authorized: 40,000. Coined: 40,000 + 23 assay. These are the only two statements that are accurate.

PS: Very nice example of an Isabella quarter !



Quote

Just Bob, Member: Seasoned Veteran, 6,214 posts, Joined: December 8, 2007. Location: Mississippi

Posted Wednesday at 12:44 PM, On 10/20/2021 at 10:34 AM, RWB said:

EARLY-COMMEM-HUNTER -

Is there an accurate record of the number of pieces melted?

Quote

RWB, Posted Wednesday at 02:04 PM (edited). On 10/20/2021 at 12:44 PM, Just Bob said:

Is there an accurate record of the number of pieces melted?

The quantity sent from the Chicago Sub-treasury to Philadelphia for melting was 15,809. They had been mislabeled "uncurrent coins" and thus became bullion. Journal entries show they were destroyed. However, there is more to the story and it turns out that although 15,809 were melted that is not the quantity actually destroyed. The rest of the story will be in my research article about restrikes, novodels, pattern distribution, etc.

The total number of Isabella quarters that actually were distributed, one way or another, is close to 40,000.

Edited Thursday at 10:39 AM by RWB correct spelling

Quote

Mohawk, Member: Seasoned Veteran, 3,868 posts, Joined: September 24, 2010. Location: Finger Lakes Region, NY

Posted Wednesday at 09:54 PM (edited)

Yet another mythical numismatic beast debunked!!! It's an interesting coin, but the mother of the Spanish Inquisition has no place in my collection. She would have had me burned at the stake.

edited Wednesday at 09:57 PM by Mohawk

Quote

RWB-Posted Thursday at 10:54 AM (edited)

Curiously, there was no specific use for the proceeds. The May 4, 1894 report on Isabella quarters shows that at least \$3,000 was paid to artist Anders Zorn for a portrait of the president of the Board of Lady Managers, Bertha Honore Palmer. There is no explanation of how this personal portrait, presented to Mrs. Palmer, furthered the goals of the Board.

Paid out for expenses to date . . . . .	\$ 692 29
Paid Sub-Treasurer for 24,191 coins . . . . .	6,047 90
Paid A. Zorn . . . . .	3,000 00
Paid L. Taft . . . . .	147 00
Cash balance with Illinois Trust & Savings Bank .	4,434 12
Cash balance with the Merchants Loan & Trust Co.	6,112 34
	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	\$20,433 65

Quote

RWB

Posted Thursday at 10:56 AM. Here's the 1893 portrait of Mrs. Palmer - certainly not the puffy matron usually depicted.

Quote

Mohawk-Posted Thursday at 12:38 PM

Quote

There is no explanation of how this personal portrait, presented to Mrs. Palmer, furthered the goals of the Board.

It looks like the so called "Age of Abuses" started much earlier in the Classic Commem series than is typically recognized, I'd say.

Quote

VKurtB-Posted Thursday at 02:27 PM

On 10/20/2021 at 9:54 PM, Mohawk said:

Yet another mythical numismatic beast debunked!!! It's an interesting coin, but the mother of the Spanish Inquisition has no place in my collection. She would have had me burned at the stake. Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!

Quote

Quintus Arrius

Member: Seasoned Veteran, 3,346 posts, Joined: March 11, 2019. Location: East Harlem, Forest Hills, Morningside Heights -- New York City. Posted yesterday at 03:16 AM

@Just Bob you certainly know how to get to the bottom of things.

The figure provided by the OP is not entirely inaccurate. Fifteen thousand eight-hundred and nine were officially melted. Then one day, I showed up Stack's and the gentlemen, after checking several references, pronounced it a fake as no proofs, or for that matter, prooflikes, were minted thereby confiscating it and either forwarding it to the Secret Service to be destroyed, or doing it himself, after-hours.

Consequently, I believe it safe to say such coin is no longer extant. 🤖no

Quote

EARLY-COMMEM-HUNTER

Member

18 posts

Joined: October 15

Posted 21 hours ago (edited)

I'm curious and will have to inquire with our host as to whether or not they're still recognizing the proof. Also curious as to what diagnostics they've been using in their determination. I've seen a few NGC proof Isabella's recently that are in "newish" style slabs so if they have ceased the recognition I'd gather it's a decision reached somewhat recently.

edited to add:

I've been thinking on this post since it was posted because I've been under the belief proofs did exist for many decades now. Surely some you learned gentlemen are more enlightened on early proof practices than I am and could explain to a fella. I have been under the belief that early proof were made with acid dipped and/or polished dies. Therefore, no extra pressure would have been necessary and that proofs would have been made by using these prepared dies and simply striking the piece a few times?  
Examples: (Photos used as educational fair use.)

Expand

So what would they have done? Just smack # 400, #1492, and #1892 twice each? It defies credibility. Maybe all that exists are PL's and not PF's.

1890, S Mint, Unc., \$1.00. Very fine, 100. Fine . . . . .50  
1890, Proof, \$1.25. Uncirculated, 75c. Fine . . . . .50  
1891, Proof, \$1.00. Uncirculated, 75c. Fine . . . . .50  
1891, S Mint, Proof, \$1.50. Uncirculated, \$1.00. Fine . . . . .50  
1892, 1893, Proof, Each, \$75c. Uncirculated . . . . .Each.. 50  
1892, O Mint, 1893, O Mint, Uncirculated . . . . .Each.. 75  
1893, Isabella, Proof, \$4.50. Uncirculated . . . . .1.50  
1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901 to 1913, inclusive, Proof, Each . . . . .60  
1916, New type, Uncirculated . . . . .1.50  
1917, No stars below Eagle, Uncirculated . . . . .75

**UNITED STATES TWENTY-CENT PIECES**

1874, Pattern in copper, A.-W. 1386, Proof . . . . .17.50  
1875, Proof, \$2.50. Uncirculated, \$1.25. Ex. fine . . . . .1.00  
1875, CC Mint, Unc., \$1.75. Very fine, \$1.25. Fine . . . . .1.00  
1875, S Mint, Unc., \$1.25. Ex. fine, \$1.00. Fine . . . . .75  
1876, Proof, \$2.50. Uncirculated, \$1.25. Ex. fine . . . . .1.00  
1877, Proof . . . . .8.50  
1878, Proof . . . . .6.50

Everything else in U. S. coins, gold, silver, copper and nickel. Also U. S. Greenbacks and Fractional Currency, foreign gold and silver, medals and tokens. Prices on any dates or varieties quoted on application.

**JOHN ZUG,**  
**Bowie,** **Maryland.**

Numismatist, August 1928. 488

Quote

RWB

Expand

These are absolutely valid -- nay, critical thoughts and they deserve careful examination.  
The earliest Numismatist mention is an August 1828 ad by John Zug:

Individual proof coins are mentioned in coin club articles beginning in about 1933 and from then into the 1970s. What I've seen in early commemorative catalogs/lists, even from Max Mehl back in 1937, do not mention proofs or anything unusual:



### 1893—ISABELLA QUARTER DOLLAR—1893

This coin has the distinction of being the only United States coin with a portrait of a foreign monarch, that of Queen Isabella. The kneeling figure on the reverse represents a spinner with distaff and spindle.

The issue of these coins was sponsored by the Board of Lady Managers of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

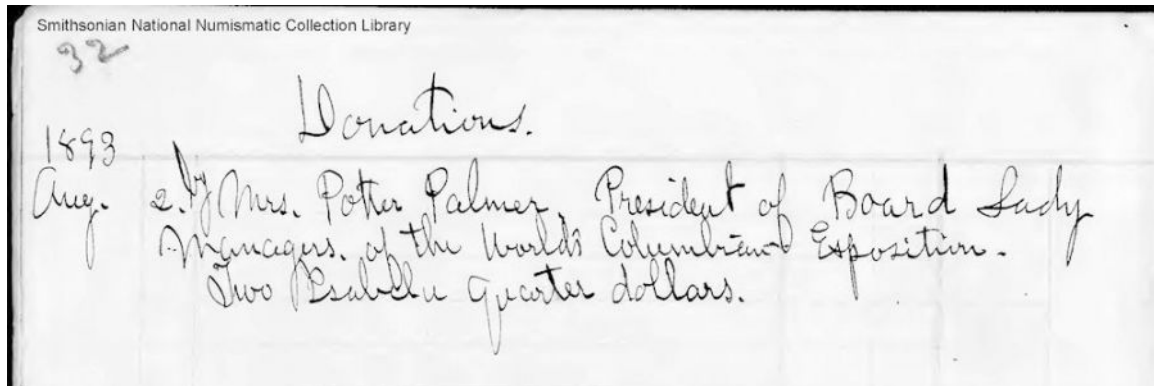
The number struck was 40,023 of which number 14,809 were returned to the Mint for remelting, and the balance of 25,214 were supposed to have been sold at \$1.00 each. However a great percentage of this number was purchased by a prominent member of the Board of Lady Managers and were afterwards released as the demand required. I well remember that these coins were obtained from the late Mr. Stevens of Chicago at 50¢ or 60¢ each in lots of 100 or more until about ten or twelve years ago.

However with the increased interest in commemorative coins the value of this, the only commemorative quarter dollar, increased rapidly where today it retails for \$3.00 each, and is detined to become more valuable and higher in price from time to time.

Quote

RWB

Bertha Palmer donated two Isabella quarters to the Mint Cabinet, but there is no mention of "proof" versions.



A collector wrote to the Mint asking to buy a proof Isabella quarter. The reply, if any, have not been located.

Elwood Iron Works, General Foundry and Machine Works Elwood, Ind., May 8, 1893

To the Superintendent of the Mint

I enclose you a receipt from the board of "Lady managers" of Worlds Fair which certifies that I have paid for and am entitled to one of the "Isabella Souvenir Coins" I have been informed by the Numismatic Bank of Boston that by sending at any time during the year of issue an extra amount I might secure what Numismatists term a "Proof" coins. I am very desirous of getting a "proof" of one of these quarters and enclose a quarter to offset expense. If this amt. will not cover expenses I will send more. Will you kindly advise me in this matter and oblige very much,  
Ed. W. Stevens

[NARA RG104, Entry 1, Box 181]

I don't recall what Taxay has to say, but none of the "standard" commemorative catalogs give a source for their information....As became popular, they all merely copied without asking for verification.

All of this begs the question of "Are there really any legitimate proof Isabella quarters?" US Mint and newspaper articles are silent or mention use of a toggle press. In 1893 the only presses used for proof coins were the old screw press, and a new hydraulic press which was available in the spring. Further, just because a coin is shiny or has a sort of mirror-like field does not mean it is a proof --- it might superficially look like a proof, but to be a legitimate proof coin it MUST have been made on one of the two presses mentioned above.

That a proof-like coin would be mistaken (or deceptively described) is not unusual. One has only to look at the massive mess of "branch mint proofs" and early "proof coins" to get some idea of the limitless imagination of the "looks-like experts." Our mechanical and process information is much better than back in the old days. We have a much greater ability to separate the real thing for the mass of "looks-like" imitations. This is partly why I insist on documentation, and clear physical conformity to original standard when examining any claim of an unusual "proof" "specimen" or other oddity.

RWB

This Coin World article excerpt might be typical of the facts:

Coin World "Mysterious Proof 1893 Isabella quarter sold"

By Steve Roach

Published: Nov 11, 2014, 2 PM

Stack's Bowers Galleries' Oct. 30 Rarities Night auction held during the Whitman Baltimore Expo was led by the 1853 Collection, but also included a variety of other numismatic items with fascinating stories. Here is one of three coins from the auction we're profiling in this week's Market Analysis.

The lot: 1893 Isabella Commemorative quarter dollar, Proof 65 Cameo  
The price: \$9,400

The story:

The 1893 Isabella commemorative quarter dollar is the only quarter in the classic 1892 to 1954 commemorative series. Consensus is that just over 100 Proof versions were minted and distributed, although the lack of official U.S. Mint records on the issue has left researchers in doubt on many points. Walter Breen wrote that the issue was “shrouded in mystery.”

The limited Proof production seems to have enjoyed a decent survival rate and examples turn up at auction with some frequency. This one, graded Proof 65 Cameo by Numismatic Guaranty Corp., is one of just two that have been designated as either Cameo or Deep/Ultra Cameo by NGC and it sold for \$9,400. The price might be considered a bargain, as another NGC Proof 65 example without a Cameo designation brought \$15,275 at a Heritage auction earlier this year.



Aluminum Medal featuring portrait of Isabella. Courtesy of *Courtesy Chicago History Museum*, i88541 (to left) and i88542. (also listed by the Chicago History Museum as ‘half dollar’)? (Is this a Caroline Peddle design? There is discussion below about a ‘mature Queen with crown’ and ‘Woman’s Building.’ The Chicago History Museum does not have the designers name – LG).

“ . . . In the editor’s comment we find the following paragraph: In the Lyman H. Low sale on the 14th inst. 400 Columbian Quarters were offered, and the question arises, what will be the selling price of these pieces after they have been dumped on an already satiated market?”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *The Numismatist*, Numismatics and The A. N. A. Twenty-Five Years Ago, March, 1925, p. 177.





Medal for Mrs. Potter Palmer, Board of Lady Managers. Courtesy Heritage Auctions.



Courtesy of Bill Jones on the PGCS Coin Forum.

## Sundry Civil Appropriation Law

March 3, 1893

World's Columbian Commission;. . . and ten thousand dollars of the appropriation for the Board of lady managers shall be paid in souvenir coins of the denomination of twenty-five cents, and for that purpose there shall be coin at the Mints of the United States silver quarter-dollars of the legal weight and fineness, not to exceed forty thousand pieces, the devices and designs upon which shall be prescribed by the Director of the Mint, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury; and said silver coins shall be manufactured from uncurrent subsidiary silver coins now in the Treasury; and all provisions of law relative to the coinage, legal-tender quality, and redemption of the present subsidiary silver coins shall be applicable to the coins herein authorized to be issued.

## Addendum to Isabella Quarter Dollars

Cornelius Vermeule writes: “. . . To complement the Columbian half dollar the government succumbed to a petition of the Board of Lady Managers of the Chicago exposition and authorized a smaller coin, a quarter dollar, for the year 1893. Charles E. Barber was again the designer, and women were acclaimed throughout (fig. 105). The crowned head and richly clothed bust of Queen Isabella on the obverse follow Gilbert Scott's Victorian Gothic tradition of photographic classicism, best summed up by the groups of continents and the relief's of famous persons on the Albert Memorial in London. The kneeling woman with distaff and spindle on the reverse, from the point of chronology, could in 1893 owe pose and some details of drapery to a figure of a servant girl from the cast pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, work of about 460 B.C. with additions and revisions in the first or second century A.D. Nowadays the coin seems charming for its quaintness and its Victorian flavor, a mixture of cold Hellenism and Renaissance romance. Perhaps one of its greatest joys is that none of the customary inscriptions, mottoes and such, appear on it.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Numismatic Art in America; Aesthetics of the United States Coinage*, 2nd edition, Cornelius Vermeule, Whitman Publishing, LLC, 2007, p. 88-89.